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Reports of the Joint Inspection Unit of relevance to UNICEF**

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document provides information on reports prepared by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) during the period October 2006 through October 2007 that are of specific relevance to UNICEF and have not yet been considered by the Executive Board. The document presents UNICEF action taken and views held on the issues raised by the inspectors.

I. Overview

1. Reports of the JIU are submitted to the Executive Heads of the organizations concerned, who then act upon the reports, as appropriate, and report to their relevant Executive Boards. The present document provides (a) information on JIU reports issued from October 2006 through October 2007 that are considered relevant to the administration and management of UNICEF; (b) comments regarding the conclusions and recommendations contained in the reports; and (c) a summary of actions undertaken by UNICEF.

2. Since the previous report of the UNICEF secretariat, "Activities of the Joint Inspection Unit of relevance to UNICEF", was presented to the Executive Board at the first regular session of 2007 (E/ICEF/2007/6), UNICEF has continued its

* E/ICEF/2008/1.
** This document was submitted late due to the need for internal consultations.

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dialogue with JIU on issues presented in the reports and on follow-up. This dialogue and interaction on issues of common interest have increased the relevance of the reports, improved implementation of recommendations and enhanced transparency. Increasingly, the funds, programmes and agencies are working together to provide consolidated responses to JIU recommendations. There is also active coordination among members of the Executive Committee of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), and with the members of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), to ensure further consistency and coherence in the handling of JIU reports for maximum benefit.

II. Reports submitted by the JIU of relevance to UNICEF

3. Since the previous report of the UNICEF secretariat was submitted to the Executive Board, JIU has issued several reports of relevance to UNICEF. The comments, observations and follow-up notes of UNICEF are summarized below.

A. "Age structure of human resources in the organizations of the United Nations system" (JIU/REP/2007/4)

4. This JIU review suggests that existing human resources reports provide only general statistics on gender, geographic distribution, and demographic profile. They lack the analytical detail to properly draw attention to the implications of age structure. In an effort to best address the impact on human resources management policies, including succession planning, the report provides recommendations to assess the age structure and average ages of staff.

5. The first three recommendations concern the insufficient attention given to age-related human resources issues and the high average age of staff. recommendation 2 requests that the staffing structures of the organizations be reviewed in order to establish a balanced staff grade structure. The recommendation also proposes that more junior posts should be established to attract young professionals. UNICEF recognizes the importance of this matter and has put in place concrete actions to address it. Specifically, the New and Emerging Talent Initiative (NETI) initiative of UNICEF, to be launched in January 2008, is of particular note. It is expected to achieve tangible results in the identification, retention and development of talent for both entry-level and more senior positions.

6. Rather than focusing solely on experience, recommendation 3 proposes placing greater emphasis on educational, technical and performance qualifications for junior professional staff. The aforementioned NETI will establish new minimum job requirements for emerging talent and concentrate on educational qualifications and development/growth within the organization.

7. Recommendation 4 states that the Executive Heads should undertake special measures to ensure the influx of young professionals and strengthen their development prospects. As noted, such measures are ongoing at UNICEF. The NETI is being developed in accordance with best practices inside both the public and private sectors.

8. The review states that succession planning as a human resources management tool is still in its infancy within the United Nations system. recommendation 5 requests that management submit regular reports showing retirement forecasts; establish performance indicators to forecast replacement; and safeguard institutional memory. Such measures are ongoing within the context of UNICEF succession planning initiatives. In 2008, a special emphasis is being placed on the consolidation of Leadership and Development for Succession Planning. UNICEF supports recommendation 6, the proposal that the CEB undertake a survey to assess the current status of succession planning in the organizations.

9. The final items, recommendations 7 and 8, concern the system's comparatively low mandatory age of retirement and the rigid regulations surrounding the employment of retirees. UNICEF agrees that these regulations should be duly reviewed.

10. In terms of the report's data presentation, the annexes would benefit from more specific notes, e.g., the precise source of the data for annexes V and VI, as well as a definition of staff. UNICEF proposes that the JIU borrow United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund data to assess the actual number of staff retired between 2001 and 2006. In addition, the data for anticipated retirement contain slight inaccuracies. A final note is that data comparisons, in order to hold weight, would benefit from significantly larger and more geographically representative sample sizes.

B. "Goodwill Ambassadors in the United Nations system" (JIU/NOTE/2006/1)

11. This JIU report highlights both opportunities and challenges related to the many Goodwill Ambassadors. The report proposes rationalizing, focusing and raising programme profiles; introducing monitoring and reporting systems; and enhancing inter-organization coordination. Besides having a few reservations about the recommendations, including a key one relating to term limits, UNICEF welcomes most of the recommendations and has already implemented the majority of them. UNICEF looks forward to continued discussions on outstanding issues.

12. According to recommendation 2, the practice of adding new nominations each year should be halted, and the total services of Ambassadors should be limited to maximum of 10 years. UNICEF notes that field offices and National Committees for UNICEF appoint National and Regional Ambassadors who are identifiable, culturally diverse, and have a reputation of advocating for child-related issues. UNICEF benefits greatly from these respected "faces" of the organization. While the number of international Ambassadors has almost doubled in the last five years, in principle UNICEF does not appoint new Ambassadors each year. Increased numbers reflect the attention paid to achieving greater balance in gender, race and age. Most importantly, UNICEF does not believe that limiting the term of service will systematically improve the effectiveness of the programme.

13. Recommendation 4 states that the practice of issuing and renewing a laissez-passer for Goodwill Ambassadors should be stopped as a means of complying with existing rules and procedures; United Nations Travel Certificates should be issued instead. UNICEF agrees and has already instituted this practice in its Goodwill Ambassador programme.

14. Recommendation 5 suggests that Executive Heads should encourage Ambassadors to self-finance travel-related expenditures and promote no-cost arrangements. UNICEF supports this notion and currently ensures that Goodwill Ambassadors travel business class. Unique exceptions, pre-approved by the Office of the Secretary-General, relate to medical conditions. UNICEF Goodwill Ambassadors are not granted a daily subsistence allowance (DSA). The hotel expenses are covered by the host country (field office or National Committee), generally within allowable DSA rates. The historical practice has been to pay for field trips. While this practice would be difficult and most likely damaging to rectify, newly appointed Ambassadors are now being encouraged to self-finance travel.

15. UNICEF agrees with recommendation 6 that Executive Heads should promote cultural and geographical diversity among Goodwill Ambassadors and decline the nominations of active political figures. The UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador list is diverse and currently includes three Africans, five Asians, seven Americans, nine Europeans, and three Latin Americans.

16. Recommendations 7 and 8 suggest that roles be outlined and indicators developed for programme success to be instituted and tracked. The celebrities' roles and contribution are developed in coordination with the UNICEF communication strategy. Prior to their engagements, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassadors are briefed on priorities and activities and are given personalized briefing kits. UNICEF appreciates the JIU acknowledgment of its monitoring and evaluation tool (paras. 51-52), which can be shared with other organizations.

17. UNICEF agrees with the final three recommendations, which deal with enhanced accountability, coordination and cooperation. Moreover, UNICEF strongly advocates for joint Goodwill Ambassadors activities, with common goals, objectives and experiences.

C. "Towards a United Nations humanitarian assistance programme for disaster response and reductions: lessons learned from the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster" (JIU/REP/2006/5)

18. This JIU review seeks to enhance the capacity of the United Nations system to coordinate and support humanitarian assistance for disaster reduction and response through: (a) integrated programmes, resource management and coordination; and (b) streamlined and standardized operational, administrative and financial practices. Though logical and comprehensive, the report only partially reflects the scope and depth of prior United Nations disaster risk management efforts. Key goals remain coherence, consolidation and clarity in humanitarian roles and responsibilities.

19. The first JIU recommendation requests that the Secretary-General be urged to review and assess the existing agreements, regulations, rules and guiding principles on international humanitarian assistance for disaster response and reduction. UNICEF agrees. However, this review should be done with the objective of consolidating and rendering coherent the multiplicity of rules and regulations. Most importantly, local, national and regional policies and capacities for risk reduction and response must be reinforced.

20. UNICEF supports JIU recommendations 2, 3 and 4 pertaining to IT access, victim identification, and cross-border logistics. Beyond the progress made towards placing communications tools in the hands of victims, States should be encouraged to contribute radio air-time so that the United Nations may disseminate humanitarian information. A victim identification system is particularly important for mass-casualty situations where local capacity is overwhelmed.

21. Recommendation 5 pertains to the use of scientific experts to inform risk management assessments. UNICEF supports this proposal, but not merely post facto or in the context of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) missions. The United Nations should sponsor disaster preparedness assessments by national Governments supported by the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the United Nations Disaster Management Team, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Sub-Working Group, UNDAC and others — beforehand — to assess risk, vulnerability, preparedness, and potential mitigation measures in disaster-prone areas. This was the logic behind the development of the Self-Assessment Tool designed by the IASC Task Force on Natural Disasters.

22. Recommendation 6, increased Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator accountability to Member States, might be considered redundant. Resident Coordinators are currently held accountable by agreement with their host Government. Humanitarian Coordinators are temporary assignments.

23. UNICEF cautions against creating yet another inter-governmental committee to handle disaster response and reduction, as proposed in recommendation 7. The focus must be placed instead on impacting coherence and coordination among the multiple organs already in existence. A multi-hazard approach would seem most appropriate, working to reduce risk and increase preparedness for natural disasters, complex emergencies, industrial hazards, pandemics, and other disasters.

24. UNICEF very much appreciates that the report underscores the UNICEF part in assisting the Indian Government and Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator in coordinating the comprehensive national reconstruction plan. Under the headline "A positive exception: the experience of India," the review notes that UNICEF acted as the focal point for local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and communities in the affected areas. "From the very day the tsunami struck, a United Nations Disaster Management Team emergency operation centre was established by staff at the UNICEF office in Chennai. In addition, a United Nations Recovery Team and NGOs established a central recovery resource centre and local centres in the tsunami-affected communities to help the local population ensure coordinated international assistance and design an adaptive reconstruction process that increased resistance to specific local multihazards" (para. 57).

25. UNICEF concurs with recommendation 8, the development of a joint integrated strategic and system-wide planning framework to manage disaster reduction and response. There have been numerous improvements in this area, including the cluster approach; IASC quarterly Early Warning-Early Action Report; HEWSweb (Humanitarian Early Warning Service); and ReliefWeb. But a single coherent system is still lacking. A major advance would be the harmonization of early warning systems by all humanitarian actors (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Office the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF, World Food Programme [WFP], World Health Organization,

et al.) and the proactive stance by Governments, Resident Coordinators and Humanitarian Coordinators to systematically apply disaster reduction and risk education efforts.

26. To ensure relief supplies effectively reach affected populations, recommendation 10 encourages humanitarian actors to establish minimum baseline indicators. The need for such indicators is clear. However, this should be the initiative of the Resident Coordinator rather than the Humanitarian Coordinator.

27. Recommendation 11 seeks to strengthen country and regional frameworks for risk management. The purpose of the self-assessment tools considered in recommendation 5 is to encourage United Nations Country Team-supported vulnerability assessments, risk/hazard mappings, and resource analyses. These practices should be mandatory and matched by generous donor support. And the revision of international frameworks must be mirrored by national and local emergency preparedness policies.

28. UNICEF would in principle agree that Resident Coordinators should be named Humanitarian Coordinators in most countries prone to different forms of disasters. However, in some countries that are in a continuous state of armed conflict or highly prone to repeated natural disasters, UNICEF would recommend that a separate Humanitarian Coordinator is appointed. This would strengthen the United Nations system's capacity to act in a coherent and effective manner. UNICEF concurs with recommendation 14, the value of utilizing the logistical expertise of WFP and the Pan American Health Organization. It is worth remembering that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is a coordinating agency, not an operational one.

29. Regarding funding and accountability — recommendations 15, 16 and 17 — any review of the Consolidated Appeal Process must not impede existing mechanisms for channeling funds to emergency situations. It is also worth noting that a vast portion of resource mobilization, fund-raising and humanitarian assistance is achieved completely outside the United Nations system. UNICEF supports the recommendation of enhanced accountability for the Central Emergency Response Fund.

D. "Voluntary contributions in United Nations system organizations" (JIU/REP/2007/1)

30. The review of voluntary contributions analyses recent trends in voluntary funding in United Nations system organizations. The report seeks to determine the impact of these trends on programme delivery, recommend measures to alleviate negative impact, and identify best practices. The system-wide analysis underlines the importance of adequate, predictable regular and core resources for effective and sustainable programme delivery. On the whole, UNICEF agrees with the recommendations. Four of the recommendations are already being implemented. The remaining three are presently under consideration in consultation with other organizations.

31. Recommendation 1 supports the establishment of an inter-governmental working group to develop proposals for a voluntary indicative scale of contributions for core resources. The scale would be based on the model adopted by the United

Nations Environment Programme. UNICEF deems this an interesting idea that deserves further consideration. UNICEF is discussing this recommendation with the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund.

32. Recommendation 2 suggests that the Executive Heads develop flexible funding modalities, such as thematic funding and pooled funding, for the consideration and approval of the legislative bodies. UNICEF currently has a thematic funding vehicle in place. This mechanism, which functions well, is scheduled for review by the UNICEF Executive Board.

33. Recommendation 3 pertains to the review of existing policies and procedures that guide interactions with donor countries. UNICEF reviews policies and procedures to ensure that interactions with donor countries are conducted in a systematic and open manner. UNICEF updates these procedures as needed.

34. Recommendation 4 requests that respective Executive Heads expedite the harmonization of cost recovery policies, carried out under the auspices of the CEB. UNICEF is currently discussing this matter with other organizations through the High Level Committee on Management.

35. Under recommendation 5, agreements negotiated with individual donor countries for associate expert or Junior Professional Officer programmes should include a funding component for candidates from underrepresented and unrepresented countries. UNICEF deems this an idea worth further discussion, but not necessarily at the level of the legislative body.

36. Recommendation 6 pertains to the development of a corporate resource mobilization strategy for the consideration and approval of the legislative bodies. And recommendation 7 requests that Executive Heads ensure that the strategy include a centralized coordinating entity. The roles, responsibilities, and delegated authorities should be clearly specified through appropriate administrative instruments. UNICEF is in agreement and currently has an approved corporate resource mobilization strategy. The existing UNICEF strategy includes a centralized coordinating entity.

E. "United Nations system staff medical coverage" (JIU/REP/2007/2)

37. This JIU report provides an overview of the United Nations system staff medical coverage. Sound strategies must be developed to contain soaring health insurance costs and guarantee adequate coverage, within the context of zero-budget growth practices adopted by the United Nations system. The increase in staff health insurance costs are due to numerous factors, including rising hospital charges, an ageing international community, increasing frequency of access to medical care, and fluctuating currencies. The remedies put forth by the JIU are presently under consideration by the Human Resources Network, which is scheduled to issue a consolidated response. UNICEF has accepted two of the recommendations.

38. Recommendation 4 suggests that the Executive Heads should undertake periodic actuarial studies based on a uniform system-wide methodology. The objective would be to determine the extent of accrued After-Service Health Insurance (ASHI) liabilities and disclose them in the financial statements. Along with other United Nations system-wide organizations, UNICEF engages a consulting actuary to carry out a valuation of post-retirement health insurance

benefits every two years. The UNICEF ASHI liability was determined to be $292 million for the biennium ended 31 December 2005, as disclosed in the financial report and audited financial statements (A/61/5/Add.2). UNICEF is participating in a United Nations system-wide update to the 2005 actuarial study currently being initiated by the United Nations Secretariat. This latest ASHI actuarial study should provide updated ASHI liability figures as of June 30, 2007.

39. Recommendation 5 proposes that the legislative bodies of each organization should (a) request that their respective Executive Heads put forward proposals for funding the ASHI liabilities; and (b) provide adequate financing to meet the liabilities and establish a reserve. This recommendation is accepted and implemented. Through a regular program of Board-approved ASHI reserve set-asides commencing in 2003, the ASHI liability of UNICEF is expected to be funded in the amount of $150 million by 31 December 2007. This would represent 51 per cent of the current ASHI liability of $292 million. Additionally, the UNICEF Board has approved future allocations that would bring the ASHI reserve to $240 million by the end of 2010.

40. The other recommendations presently under consideration or being addressed include: requesting that the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) undertake periodic reviews; establishing an ad hoc advisory body to assist ICSC in formulating broader principles, policies and standards for staff health insurance schemes; harmonizing and establishing periodic reporting vis-à-vis scope of coverage, contributions and benefits; establishing a common fund, invested in a manner similar to the assets of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund; and implementing coordinated cost containment measures. Given the importance of these items, the Human Resources Network is currently formulating a consolidated position that will incorporate UNICEF input.

III. Ongoing/forthcoming reports of the Joint Inspection Unit of relevance to UNICEF

41. At the Executive Board's first regular session of 2009, UNICEF will present its comments, as appropriate, on some or all of the JIU reviews and reports scheduled for completion in the next year that have potential relevance to UNICEF work. Below is the preliminary list of such reports for 2007 and beyond:

(a) "Review of the management of the United Nations laissez-passer";

(b) "A second review of the implementation of headquarters agreements concluded by United Nations system organizations";

(c) "Staff mobility in the United Nations system";

(d) "Study on knowledge management in the United Nations system";

(e) "Liaison offices in United Nations organizations";

(f) "Review of Environmental Governance within the United Nations system";

(g) "Review of the progress made by United Nations organizations in achieving the Millennium Development Goals to combat HIV/AIDS";

(h) "Review of selected telecommunications services and use of VOIP technologies in the organizations of the United Nations system";

(i) "Corporate Sponsoring in the United Nations system";

(j) "Review of the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service";

(k) "Common Services Nairobi".